

Detroit and Wayne County's Prevention Response to the Fentanyl Overdose Outbreak



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How Did We Know We Had a Problem?

- The Wayne County Medical Examiner noticed a marked increase in drug-related deaths due to Fentanyl.
- August 28, 2005 – May 31, 2006

Detroit/Wayne County had one of the highest number of confirmed Fentanyl-related deaths from all causes (e.g., homicide, drug overdose, motor vehicle accidents, suicides, etc.)



How Did We Know We Had a Problem?

August 28, 2005 – May 31, 2006

- According to the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Toxicology Laboratory, there were 130 of such cases during this time period.
- Of these, 28 deaths were due to Fentanyl intoxication alone and 102 involved a combination of drugs including heroin, morphine and cocaine:
 - ❑ 52% Detroit Residents
 - ❑ 65% Male
 - ❑ 60% White



How Did We Know We Had a Problem?

- 2-3 people die every day in Wayne County due to all drug-related causes.
- Heroin-related deaths have been on the rise since the 1990s in Detroit.



How Did We Get Involved?

- Medical Examiner notified the Wayne County Public Health Director.
- Who Notified the Medical Director, Detroit-Wayne County Mental Health Agency.
- Who Notified the Director, City of Detroit Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment & Recovery.
- Who Notified the Director and Public Health Officer, City of Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion (DHWP).



How Did We Respond?

- Recognized right away that we had to protect the public through a community education effort.
- This included strategies to reach both recreational and chronic drug users.
- Recognized that this would take a coordinated, community-wide effort including local, county and state partners.
- Crafted a three-part message:
 - ☐ Drugs Kill
 - ☐ Treatment Works
 - ☐ Help is Available



How Did We Respond?

- Held a Press Conference and a Press Release notifying the media that Fentanyl was a problem.
- Produced 4 Health Alerts:
 - ❑ Through the Michigan Health Alert Network, notified 2,000 health care providers that Fentanyl overdose is a problem;
 - ❑ Through the Michigan Health Alert Network, notified 2,000 health care providers to properly secure and dispose of Fentanyl;
 - ❑ The Michigan Poison Control Center provided ERs & EMS personnel updated information on treating Fentanyl overdose.

How Did We Respond?

- The Substance Abuse Public Health Alert notified providers, hospitals, homeless shelters, community residents, the media, etc. that there is a lethal drug on the streets. This Alert was the most widely distributed to 50,000 individuals and organizations including:
 - ❑ Electronic Music Festival (May 2006)
 - ❑ Posted on the websites of the Substance Abuse Coordinating Agencies
 - ❑ The Recovery Community visited high street drug trafficking areas





How Did We Respond?

- **Worked with the Communications Department to get local and nationwide media coverage through:**

Print: Detroit Free Press, Detroit News, Associated Press, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Electronic: MSN News and Yahoo News

TV: CNN *Live*; UPN *Street Beat*; Fox 2 News; NBC 4 News; ABC 7 News; CBS 62 News

Radio: National Public Radio's (NPR) *All Things Considered*; Radio One's *Michael Eric Dyson Show*; WDET; WJR; and WWJ



How Did We Respond?

- Participated in weekly CDC-sponsored phone conferences with other cities experiencing the same issue.
- Wayne County Medical Examiner invited the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for consultation to review and analyze cases.
- There was a coordinated law enforcement response between the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Wayne County Sheriff Office and the Detroit Police Department that resulted in several arrests related to Fentanyl deaths.
- H. Westley Clark, MD, JD, MPH, Director of SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), provided technical assistance and consultation with Kenneth Hoffman, MD.



How Did We Respond?

- **Formed the Detroit-Wayne County Fentanyl Work Group to spearhead a coordinated rapid response. Representatives include:**
 - ☐ City of Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion
 - ☐ Wayne County Department of Public Health
 - ☐ Wayne County Medical Examiner
 - ☐ Detroit-Wayne County Mental Health Agency
 - ☐ Michigan Office of Drug Control Policy
 - ☐ Michigan Department of Community Health
 - ☐ Governor's Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives
 - ☐ Drug Enforcement Agency/High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Intelligence Group
 - ☐ Wayne County Sheriff's Office
 - ☐ Detroit Police Department: Organized Crime, Narcotics, Crime Laboratory, and Major Crimes Divisions
 - ☐ Substance Abuse Providers
 - ☐ Mental Health Providers
 - ☐ Wayne State University
 - ☐ Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG)
 - ☐ Recovery Community
 - ☐ Emergency Rooms
 - ☐ Michigan Regional Poison Control Center

How Did We Respond?

- Developed 30-second and 60-second public service announcements aimed at adults 18-49 in Detroit and Kalamazoo areas





Opportunities for Improvement

- Examine and Strengthen an Emergency Preparedness Response.
- Need to improve effective health care communications to vulnerable persons (homeless, chronic drug users, persons with chronic mental illness, etc.)



Opportunities for Improvement

- Standardize nationwide data gathering for medical examiners.
- Publish emergency room overdose data on a monthly basis.
- Develop standardized surveillance and response protocols to prevent future overdose epidemics.



Opportunities for Improvement

- The public health agenda must better address the needs of vulnerable persons, specifically, those with substance abuse and mental health disorders.
- Expand overdose prevention opportunities.



Opportunities for Improvement

- Community Mental Health must play an increasing role in Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security.
- Our disaster response activities must be increasingly integrated into our overall community disaster response.
 - Northwest Airlines Flight 255 crash 1987
 - Tornado Hamtramck, Highland Park 1997
 - Power Outage 2003
 - Hurricane Katrina
 - Super Bowl 2006
 - Fentanyl Overdose Outbreak
 - Lebanon Evacuees